

THE HERITAGE OF LIFE
JAMES BUCKHAM



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The Heritage of Life.

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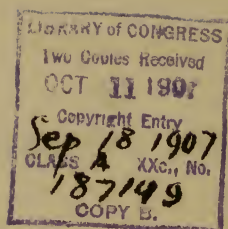
JAMES BUCKHAM



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Foreword.



TO EACH and every soul life brings some heritage of good. It may not always be obvious good; it may not be the kind of good that lies upon the surface; but more and more, as life goes on, the devout spirit grows into the conviction that the *all of life*, the total result of its experiences, is good.

We need to look for the hidden good, as well as the obvious good, in life. We need to establish the faith that everything that life brings us has some blessing in it; that there is good, not only in what at first

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seems good, but in what at first seems ill. God assigns us no lessons in the school of life that are not divinely worth the learning. If we can only get at the heart of them, their hidden meaning, let us be assured that all experiences are blest.

It takes time, and a certain loving, loyal dwelling upon that great word *Providence*, to convince the soul that there is an essential and discoverable blessing in every one of God's dealings with it. But by-and-by, through loyalty of faith, through prayer's insight, through humble waiting for the message of God, the soul does perceive how each experience of life adjusts itself, intelligibly and inspiringly, to a Divine plan—God's plan for the spiritual refinement and development of the individual.

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There comes to the soul then a sweet, joyful, uplifting assurance of the eternal rightness and goodness of things. We feel that "All's well with the world"—our individual world, as well as the greater world whose bounds include humanity—because God is in it.

This is the most precious heritage that life can bring to a human soul—the perception, the conviction, that there is something that makes for good in every experience—in joy and in sorrow, in gain and in loss, in hope and in discouragement, in helps and in hindrances, in the humblings of moral weakness and the triumphs of moral strength. For by all these things God is testing us, and teaching us, and strengthening us, and bringing us nearer to such perfec-

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tion of character as is possible for us to attain.

It is with the hope that the following pages may help, however imperfectly, to make this great truth more clear, and more available for spiritual comfort and encouragement, that this little volume is offered to the Christian public.

MELROSE, MASS.

The Discipline of Life.

A STUDENT of insect life once found the curious, flask-shaped cocoon of an emperor moth, and kept it in her room in order that she might observe the emergence of the beautiful creature. At length, when nearly a year had passed, she discovered signs of the embryo's awakening. During a whole forenoon she watched the efforts of the moth to escape from its prison. There was just one narrow opening in the neck of the cocoon, through which the insect must force its way, an opening so greatly disproportionate to the size of the embryo that the struggle seemed to the watcher al-

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most hopeless. When it had been protracted for hours her patience became exhausted, and her sympathy so roused that she seized a pair of scissors and snipped the confining threads, to make the exit of the embryo easy. Immediately the moth emerged, dragging a huge, swollen body and little, shriveled wings. "In vain," says the observer, "I watched to see that marvelous process of expansion in which these wings, in the normal embryo, silently and swiftly develop before one's eyes; and as I traced the exquisite spots and markings of divers colors which were all there in miniature, I longed to see these assume their due proportions, and the creature appear in all its perfect beauty, as it is, in truth, one of the loveliest of its kind. But I

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looked in vain. My false tenderness had proved its ruin. It never was anything but a stunted abortion, crawling painfully through that brief life which it should have spent flying through the air on rainbow wings."

In artificially enlarging the passage through which the insect was struggling to emerge, the observer had interfered with a provision of nature by which the fluids necessary to expansion and coloration are forced into the vessels of the insect's wings. These, in the case of the emperor moth, are less developed at the period of emergence from the chrysalis than are those of most other insects. The severe and prolonged struggle of emergence from its cocoon is absolutely necessary to the

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emperor moth in order that it may realize its normal and beautiful development, its fullness of life. Deprived of this struggle, it must remain a stunted and distorted creature while it lives, crawling instead of flying, ugly instead of beautiful, pitifully cheated of its birthright, and condemned to a brief existence of helplessness and misery.

* * * * *

Is not this one of those marvelous correspondences between the natural and spiritual worlds, by which we are taught the identity of the laws that govern both these great provinces of the Creator? The law of spiritual development—is it not the same in character and operation as the law disclosed by this experiment in the life-history of the emperor moth?

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The soul, too, must have its struggle with environment, with the trying conditions of life, in order that it may emerge perfected and beautified, its celestial wings expanded and made radiant by the life-currents which only stress and suffering can cause to flow through them. That is the Divine, the inevitable condition of soul-growth. "No sparing men the process," as Browning says. Just as surely as the soul is cheated of its struggle, deprived of its opportunity of meeting and overcoming the hard conditions of life, just so surely it loses its birthright of Divine expansion and beauty, of development into the likeness of Christ's perfect humanity.

May we not see, then, that it is a false benevolence, a cruel and harm-

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ful interference with the development of any soul, one's own or another's, to cut for it the God-appointed fibers of discipline, that it may pass through them without that struggle that spreads and irradiates for the spirit its celestial wings? Ah! the misguided charity that would lift from another's shoulders the burden that would steady him through life, that would develop and strengthen him, and make him eternally more manly and more angelic! There are burdens that should be shared; there are even burdens that should be entirely borne for one by others; but there are no spiritual burdens that the soul is called upon to bear as tests and disciplines, which it should be denied the gracious privilege of bearing.

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“To suffer is divine,” says Whit-
tier. Yes, divine in its influence and
divine in its result. The struggle of
the soul is a struggle of redemption,
a struggle upward and Godward.
It is the struggle of spiritual evolu-
tion. In no other way can the soul
attain fullness of life, emancipation
from the finite, and communion and
fellowship with God.

“ Then welcome each rebuff
That turns earth’s smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand, but
go !
Be our joys three parts pain !
Strive, and hold cheap the strain ;
Learn, nor account the pang ; dare, never
grudge the throe.”

* * * * *

Some two or three centuries ago,
there lived in Italy an artist who was
ambitious to leave behind him an en-

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during name and fame; but, as time went on and youth and early manhood vanished, he became aware that his work was not rising above the even level of excellence which it had attained in his first efforts. Try as hard as he might, he could not, at forty-five, paint a picture that excelled in strength or originality or significance the work which he had produced at twenty-five. This greatly troubled him, and finally he went to a famous master in his own art and begged to be told, if it were possible, the secret of his failure to grow. "I have worked hard," he cried. "My aim has been single and my toil ceaseless. Yet I am no nearer achieving greatness as an artist than I was in my youth. Tell me the reason why."

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“Since thou wouldst know the very truth,” was the great artist’s reply, “I will give it in the fewest words. Thou art rich, and livest at ease and apart. Thou hast never known the discipline of life. Distribute thy wealth among the poor. Go forth and suffer with those who suffer, and toil with those who toil by a divine necessity. Follow the way of the cross, and thou wilt enter into the power of that art whose fittest symbol is the cross.”

Wise words of the wise master! Discipline and suffering are, indeed, the sources of vital power. Out of them spring the æsthetics as well as the ethics of life. If any of us are ambitious to do original, creative work we must address ourselves to it in a mood of strong and quick

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feeling—feeling that is distinctly personal and not vicarious; and in order to become masters of that strong emotion which lies at the basis of all art, we must be genuine participants in the discipline of life, in its deep sufferings as well as its exalting joys, in its sorest trials as well as its gladdest triumphs.

Not long ago one of our young American writers lost her father and her elder brother by the same sudden and terrible disease. The support of an invalid mother and of four younger brothers and sisters fell upon her, and she set herself to the task with undaunted faith and courage. From that day began her vital power as a writer. She derived that strength out of her hard contact with life which the fabled Antæus is

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said to have received from mother earth every time he was flung upon it. Her stories displayed a nobility of conception, an intensity of feeling, a loftiness of tone, which they had never before shown. Her very vocabulary was enriched and quickened by suffering. She entered bravely into the way of the cross, and the crown of the matured and successful artist was her reward.

Is it not noticeable how the griefs of the world make up almost all of its great literature and art and music? How true the words of that brave toiler and singer, George Alfred Townsend:

“ All our art is a cross,
And our gospel but sorrow and loss ! ”

The stories, and the poems, and the pictures, and the songs that melt us

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to tears are the works of art round which men and women will forever twine the immortelles of fame. We are all traveling heavenward by the way of the cross, and when some fellow-pilgrim, to whom God has granted the gift of expression, comes down into our individual experience of pain and loss and denial, and not only expresses all we feel, but interprets all we feel, first in words tremulous with emotion, and then ringing with hope and faith, how can humanity let such a revelation and such a message die? It is too vital, too immortal in its very essence, to be forgotten. It is thus that art perfects and perpetuates itself, adding to the great essentials of insight and sympathy the graceful charm of cultivated expression.

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Art always needs for its perfecting the emphasis and sanction of life. We can not get at the heart of humanity, either in creative or interpretative work, unless we know through personal experience what it is to struggle and to wait, to suffer and to lose, to feel the going over of the great billows and the unsealing of the fountains of tears, and yet, in all, to look up with that unshaken and abiding faith which is able to say, "Thy will, O God, not mine, be done!"

* * * * *

In one of the famous lace-shops of Brussels there are certain retired rooms devoted to the spinning of the finest and most delicate lace patterns. These rooms are altogether darkened, save for the light from one

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very small window falling directly upon the pattern. There is only one spinner in the room, and he sits where the narrow stream of light falls upon the threads that he is weaving. "Thus," you are told by your guide, "do we secure our choicest products. Lace is always more delicately and beautifully woven when the worker himself is in the dark, and only his pattern is in the light."

Does not the same beautiful and mysterious result appear in work of any kind, when surrounding shadows compel the toiler to fix his attention solely upon the task in hand—the task upon which falls the concentrated light of life? When a soul finds itself shut in by disappointments, trials, bereavements, disci-

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plines, or physical limitations, to its divinely appointed task, the one thing it is best fitted to do or to teach in this world, how marvelously the pattern is wrought! What new power and beauty appear in both work and character! That one small window through which falls the light of heaven full upon our task is, how often, the essential condition of highest achievement!

Lives that have been hitherto full of divided interest, of scattered enthusiasms and dissipated energies, often become rarely and beautifully concentrated by trials. As the shadows shut in around the worker, his eyes seek more steadily and earnestly the pattern that has been given him to weave. The interest of life grows more and more concentrated and in-

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tense. The thoughts and desires become fixed upon that which alone can now yield satisfaction to the soul. There is an abandonment, a throwing of the entire nature into the performance of one's highest function, that insures noblest results. Milton blind, Bunyan and Defoe in prison, Franklin penniless, Hawthorne a victim of temperamental loneliness, Luther banished,—all these are examples of concentration of native power through trial. Biography is full of instances of encompassing shadow intensifying the light of purpose upon the soul's true mission.

* * * * *

In truth, the disciplines of life, rightly interpreted, are God's emancipators of the soul to higher, wider, more Christlike uses. To cherish the

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bitterness of any is to deny and thwart the will and purpose of God; but to take it, if it comes, and when it comes, as a holy messenger, bringing from God a commission to greater Christian usefulness and helpfulness, that is noble, that is Christlike; and great is the joy of the redeemed over every new ministrant who goes forth out of that stern school, with eyes washed by tears and hands made gentle and willing by the touch of pain.

The Shining Side of Sorrow.

IT is no mere pleasing generality to say that everything has its bright side. It is true in a very practical sense of many apparently unfortunate things. This is a vital conclusion from experience—a lesson which we who have learned it are divinely commissioned to teach to others. Even sorrow has its bright side. For it is a blessed fact that no event in personal history, if rightly interpreted and rightly used, can fail to add some higher satisfaction, some profounder peace and happiness, to the life we are living here on earth.

Sorrow's bright side—what is it, then? Well, in the first place, there

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is the almost invariable betterment of character. It is very seldom indeed that a great sorrow does not improve the quality of a human life, does not refine and cleanse and regulate and, to some extent, transform it. There is at first, to be sure, a period of stormfulness, of turbulence, of strong reaction and protest, like the beating of waves against the rocks. But after that comparatively brief period of natural reaction and turbulence, there comes to the sane, reasonable, and especially the religious soul a period of wonderful clarifying and calm, of spiritual elevation and moral strengthening. And as the weeks and months go by, this refinement and regeneration of the soul through sorrow crystallizes into character, and the man becomes, un-

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consciously perhaps, stronger and better because of the storm that has so stirred the depths of his being. I doubt if any Christian would dispute for a moment the assertion that the spiritual manhood of the race as a whole, its moral goodness, its character-level, would be infinitely lowered, if sorrow were to be stricken out of our lives altogether.

And so, as the individual reviews his past life, he can not help admitting that it has been chiefly his sorrows that have lifted him up to higher moral and spiritual planes. Is it not always, as the inspired hymnist sang,

“ Out of my stony griefs
Bethel I ’ll raise?”

Yes, it is sorrow that exalts character, that promotes and strengthens

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every spiritual grace. And surely this is one of the largest possible causes for rejoicing, for gratitude, for peace of mind and heart. If a noble result like this fails to gladden any human soul, then that soul must be singularly deadened and abased. It is not quick to the things that ought to rejoice, and do rejoice, spirits of the highest order.

* * * * *

Then, there is another gleam from the bright side of sorrow—its marvelous opening of the fountains of human sympathy. Truly, it is a beautiful and touching thing, this reverent and tender and gentle and brotherly human response to the cry of suffering, whether it be physical or spiritual. Let any child of God be in trouble, anywhere, and how al-

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most always there is some other child of God near at hand to help and comfort. Men lavish themselves—the best they are and have—upon other men who are in piteous necessity. There are few men so degraded as to be insensible to an appeal for help. And so in sorrow one discovers such sweet, deep joy of friends, of helpers. One is privileged to make such a large draft upon the fund of human sympathy that carries us through so many moral crises. “I never knew,” cried one who had been bereaved, “that I had so many and such dear, true friends!” It is a sweet and joyful revelation of the solidarity of the race in love, that one often gets in the midst of crushing sorrow. And, as the shadow lifts a little from one’s life with the pass-

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ing of time, how gladly one clings to this new revelation of the warm friendliness of one's kind!

Here, then, is one outlook, and a broad and beautiful one, into the Divine purpose. Sorrow is essential to the opening of those heart-fountains which flow out to humanity. The more private fountains of love for nearest and dearest—it is not enough that these should flow freely and sweetly in order that life may give forth all that is in it. Something more is needed, something more than kin-love and blood-affection, that the human soul may have full expression. There needs to be a Christlike expansion of heart, that will take in humanity and love it and minister to it. This does not necessarily imply missionary zeal or de-

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votement, in the strict sense, nor does it require open enlistment in the service of philanthropy or charity. But it does mean such a warming and expanding of the heart toward our fellowmen that we shall be drawn to them in their troubles and their needs, and shall freely and gladly give of our resources of sympathy and help to make their burdens lighter.

What experience in life opens the way to this loving-kindness like personal suffering? Is there, indeed, any other way for a comparatively cold, selfish, indifferent heart to be born again into the gracious life of brotherhood? If we ourselves do not suffer, can we so much as understand the suffering of others, to say nothing of knowing how to minister to it?

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Truly, God does touch us with grief and trouble that we may be enabled to touch others with love. It is His way of calling us out of the narrowness of the self-centered life into the breadth and largeness and Christlikeness of the life of brotherhood and ministry. Suffering of all kinds should be taken by us, not as a shutting in, but as a calling out. It is not—or, at any rate, it ought not to be—a paralyzing and narrowing experience, but rather one that stimulates and broadens. If it shuts the door to a quiet, sweet, personal happiness, on the one hand, does it not open wide, on the other hand, a door to large and increasing blessedness in the service of others?

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Another hidden and unsuspected source of joy in the midst of sorrow is the wonderful way in which sorrow opens up the Bible. There is no commentary that was ever written, no science, no learning, no profound exposition, that can open up this grand old Bible of ours like the strange touch of this finger of sorrow. In the midst of our bitter suffering we turn to the Word of God—and suddenly those familiar pages are illumined. A marvelous light of interpretation streams upon them. They disclose, as it were, new truths, new promises, raised in letters of gold. No one can read all there is in his Bible who has not suffered. There are Scripture meanings that must be hidden until one has known what it is to suffer. But after sor-

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row comes, the whole Bible seems to glow with significance. It becomes a thousand times more real, more vital, more pregnant than it ever seemed to us before. We can not only read the promises then as we never read them before, but we can take hold upon them and appropriate them. Is not this something to be thankful for? Is it not a great and abiding source of joy? Thank God for these stars of Bible truth that shine out only in the night of human sorrow!

The Meaning of Death.

UNTIL Christianity came, there was no place in any of the religions of the world for death. Here was this great, significant, awful fact, recognized, to be sure, but unexplained in the message of any pagan religion to humanity. Or, if an explanation were attempted, it was such a hopeless, fatuous, illusory, and unsatisfying one that the human heart felt impelled to reject it. The philosophies and religions of the ancient world beat helplessly against that stern reality of death, and fell back broken and confused. There seemed no other way than to count it as the

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great, the final mystery, beyond which lay either nothing, the eternal blank of personal annihilation, or else such a shadowy, wailing, dolorously reminiscent existence as were infinitely worse than ceasing to be.

To this incompleteness of revelation, to this utter perplexity of thought, came Christianity with its marvelous, its soul-convincing, its ineffably sweet and beautiful conception of the place of death in the Divine plan. As if a dark curtain had been suddenly snatched from before a clear-shining light, mankind saw in the twinkling of an eye the revealed mystery of death. How indubitable, how all-sufficient, how penetratingly glad and glorious was the revelation! There must have been many a soul that said to itself

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then: "Why has it never come to me before that this might be the meaning of death?—an explanation so simple, so reasonable, so perfectly in accord with my own consciousness and inward conviction? Strange that no one in the world, until this Revealer came, taught that death is the gateway to a grander and sweeter and nobler existence, for which this life simply serves as a preparation."

And indeed it would seem strange, if one did not remember that all great revelations and discoveries bear, as if it were a divine stamp of genuineness, the sanction of simplicity. Every one, when disclosed, seems the first thing the puzzled mind, the bewildered soul, should have hit upon in its searching; and yet it is always the last!

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The Christian explanation of death was the final, the all-sufficient explanation. After that radiant Easter revelation, the world searched and sorrowed no more for light. Light was all about it, and within it, and above it. There was no more room for darkness anywhere—not a corner of the universe where a shadow of that ancient mystery of death could lurk.

No wonder that the dominance of that new religion in the world was assured from the hour when Christ rose from the grave. This was the one supreme knowledge for which humanity had been longing since the days of the patriarchs—the knowledge that personal consciousness, that the essential life of man, did not end with the grave, but bridged it

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like a beam of light. Since the dawn of that memorable Easter morning on the hills about Jerusalem, the light that then came into the troubled soul of humanity has not ceased to spread throughout the waiting world, nor will it cease until its message of joy has shined into every human soul, and all hearts and all voices shall join in swelling the universal Easter hymn.

* * * * *

Is it not suggestive that the poet speaks of the medium of separation between earth and heaven as a *veil*? Only the thinnest, filmiest barrier intervenes between this life and that other life, to whose borders we approach so closely every day. True, we can not penetrate this veil by sight, neither can we remove it or even lift it; but what is true of a

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material veil or curtain is also true of this immaterial fabric, that life, motion, energy, contact on the other side, are reported in undulations which are plainly perceptible on this side. Heaven is so near to us that we are getting intimations of it all the time, distinct wave-motions in the separating veil, that none but the narrowest materialism can refuse to take into account. In numberless ways the truly spiritual nature feels the nearness of heaven and detects the stirrings of that other life. Some of these intuitions and intimations are too fine, delicate, and evanescent to be caught and expressed in words at all; others are reported in poems, sermons, or other religious writings, so vividly and sweetly that they are understood by thousands who have re-

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ceived the same intimations, but have never been able to put them into speech.

There are times when we draw very near to the veil that separates earth from heaven—times when we feel with peculiar distinctness, not only the reality, but the vital closeness of the life that is stirring on the other side of the curtain. The passing of a loved one from earth is one of these occasions. How that delicate, sensitive medium of separation between the life that now is and the life that is to come vibrates and undulates with the passage and the lingering near of the spirit that is so closely bound by love's ties to our own! Say what the materialists may, there is for the Christian a distinct consciousness of heaven at the mo-

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ment when a dear one enters it. The veil is not rent or lifted so that we may see through it, but it is stirred as by the touch of angel garments, and we know that our loved one has not passed far away from us, but is there within reach of a hand-clasp, if only our hand of flesh could penetrate the curtain of the invisible.

In moments of great spiritual exaltation also there is a stirring of the veil, and we almost feel the movings of the heavenly airs responsive to our longings and aspirations. Trouble, too, brings a vivid sense of heaven's nearness. The Christian's agonized prayer is like a touching of the veil or curtain with the bowed forehead, so that the undulation of that great desire is borne to the very presence-chamber of God. Anything that

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deeply moves and strongly accentuates the spiritual nature, subordinating what is material in us, brings us very close to the veil that is stirring with the intenser and sweeter life of heaven. We feel heaven's nearness whenever we feel anything most deeply and spiritually.

It will not be a far journey when, one by one, we pass out of the present life into that other life so closely touching earth's. "In a bound, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, in the throb of a pulse, in the flash of a thought, we may start into disembodied spirits."

* * * * *

Here is a mother whom death has deprived of a dearly loved child. How silent, how desolate the house, now that the little feet go running

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hither and thither no more, and the childish voice is hushed! The very sunlight falling upon the carpet where the little one played, seems to have lost its brightness, and the mother can scarcely bear to look at the box where the broken toys are lying. She thinks that she has given up her child, that God has utterly taken it away from her, and her faith is sorely tried. She can not understand. She cries out, with the stricken patriarch, "O God, my days are past, my purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart!" It seems as if life had no more value, no more meaning for her. But the days pass, and gradually she begins to think of her child as a waiting, hovering angel—hers still, and God's—only lovelier and sweeter and hap-

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pier than it ever was while on earth. The angel-child is ever with her, sustaining, purifying, uplifting. Heaven, too, seems nearer and dearer and more real than ever in the days of her earthly happiness. She has escaped that temporal joy which so often snares the soul and keeps it from soaring toward the purer air.

And now also that yearning heart, which was once bound up in the welfare of a single child, goes out in a great flood of tenderness and sympathy toward all little ones everywhere, toward all the helpless and suffering and unmothered children of God. She becomes a Saint Agnes, a child-lover and child-protector. And over all her aspirations, devo-

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tions, philanthropies, hovers that child-angel whom she once thought God had taken away from her. Now indeed she sees a new and larger meaning in life, and instead of forfeited days, instead of broken purposes, the future stretches before her, rich in opportunities, inconceivably full of meaning and joy. Then she knows that there is a forsaking which is not giving up. What has Christ asked her to forsake? Only the care of the casket of a soul-jewel. Has she not the jewel still, and is it not a thousand times brighter and purer than it would have been had it remained upon the earth? And by-and-by she shall possess it with heaven's completeness. "He can not come to me, but I shall go to him,"

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is her exulting cry. And she shall go to her child; she shall receive an hundred-fold portion of love.

* * * *

Two gentlemen were conversing, when mention chanced to be made of a certain Western city. "I have a warm and almost affectionate interest in that community," said one of them, "although I have never been there. The dearest friend I have in the world, outside my own family, has recently moved to T——, after having been my next-door neighbor for more than twenty years. Until he took up his residence there, I had not the least interest in the city or its people. Indeed, I thought, from what I had read, that it must be a decidedly uninteresting and prosaic place to live in. Now my whole con-

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ception of T——, and my feelings toward it, are changed. I look eagerly for items concerning it in the newspapers. I try to form vivid pictures of it from my friend's letters, and delight in imagining how the city and surrounding country must look; and I am eagerly awaiting the time when I can make a trip thither, and see for myself. Is it not strange what a new aspect the presence of one we love will give to a place for which we have hitherto cared nothing, or which we may even have disliked?"

There is another city, not of earth, to which our dear ones go, never to return to the community of which we still form a part. And how their departure to that distant city hallows and endears and beautifies and actualizes it to us! The whole concep-

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tion of heaven, of the life beyond, changes when we can look out across the separating space and time, and say, "There dwells my loved one." How real becomes the city, which was formerly but a name! We love to sit down and fancy how it looks—the shining streets; the light that is not of the sun, but diffused everywhere and always with softened glory from the presence of God; the surrounding country (for we know that there must be country in such a beautiful place), lofty hills, and green valleys, and still, winding streams. The city has become precious and endeared to us, because among its myriad inhabitants is one whose hand we held when he was going away to be a citizen there.

This is one of the Easter signifi-

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cances of death, that, through it, God is transferring our affections, our longings, our hopes, our plans, from earth to heaven—from the tenting-place to the dwelling-place, from the dark valley of preparation to the shining heights of eternal realization. He weans us over, as it were, from earth to heaven, by taking our loved ones to Himself, and leading after them our hearts' desires and our sanctified imaginations and hopes. All the beauties and glories of the apocalyptic vision might make no appeal to us, satisfied as we are with this earth where our loved ones dwell, if God did not endear to us the city which is to be our eternal home, by calling some of our cherished ones to dwell there. Then, immediately, our longings go out to it, we dream of

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it, we hope for it, we live so as to be more fit for it.

Blessed is the soul that interprets the death of loved ones, not as a taking away, but as a taking up, a setting forward, a transfiguration, an exaltation! They have simply gone to be with God and Christ our Redeemer in the beautiful city whither we are all bound, and whither the longest life will bring us sooner than we realize.

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TO BE happy is the native prerogative of every child of God. Our Heavenly Father has made us all to be knowers of joy. It was His intention, and it is ever His will, that the human spirit should live and expand in the sunshine, just as a flower does. To speak of this world as necessarily a sad and gloomy place, a "vale of tears," an "abode of sorrow," is to interpret unfairly the evident intention of God. God has made His children exquisitely susceptible to joy, and has placed them in an environment marvelously contrived to minister to their happiness. If any soul

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is not happy, it is because that soul has in some way missed or avoided the purpose of God. Its unhappiness is the result either of its own mistake or its own deliberate interpretation and use of life. God never intended or planned that it should be unhappy. Something has interfered to defeat His beneficent purpose. What is it?

The most frequent source of human unhappiness is the overlooking of the nearness of joy. Here at our feet lie the springs of every-day and perpetual happiness, but we gaze far beyond them in our search for the sources of joy.

Joy, the kind of joy that lasts and satisfies, is always near at hand; it is the daily bread and wine of the soul. Those who seek it far away

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never find it, because they are constantly leaving it behind them. It is the habitual *overlooking* of the discontented spirit that robs it of its rightful daily portion of joy in this world.

It is so easily possible to be continually happy in little things—so-called “little” things, but what we mean when we say “little” is simply “constant.” There is not a soul, living under average conditions in this world, that does not enjoy a sufficient portion of these constant blessings to make it always glad. There are, to begin with, the sweet functions of life—physical life; and how sweet they are it needs only a week’s sickness or starvation or crippling to demonstrate. Or, even if some part of these vital functions is lost, there

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are close at hand other ministrants of happiness. There is the power of rational thought. Have you ever realized what an unspeakably happy, blessed thing it is to be sane instead of insane? Sit for but a single hour with a person whose mind is unbalanced, and who is constantly imagining the most abnormal and terrible and pitiful things, and then come out into the sunshine of your own rationality, and say, if you can, that there is nothing to be particularly thankful for in mere sanity of mind.

Then there is love—every-day love, home-love, friend-love, the love and kindness and companionable feeling of one's fellow-mortals. How constant, how common the experience, yet how ineffably blessed! Daily affection, daily ministry—how sweet,

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how lovely, how precious! And shall we be forever looking beyond these things for the joy of life? God help us to see that the joy of life is very near, so near that we can not breathe or move without being in constant touch with it. These sweet, wholesome delights of physical existence; health, food, sound functions, sanity; human love and kindness; congenial work, which is like the track to the locomotive; the simple pleasures and recreations possible to the poorest and humblest of us; the good book; the sweet strain of music; the snatch of pleasant conversation; the hour of peaceful, uplifting worship; the caress of a child; the rapture of doing good,—how many are the humble, simple, wise ways of being happy!

In spite of its admixture of sor-

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row, human life may be very blessed, if we do not overlook the nearness of joy. Sorrow must be; we can not avoid that, but sorrow is a very different thing from unhappiness. Sorrow is positive; unhappiness is negative. Sorrow is necessary; unhappiness is unnecessary. Sorrow is the wholesome bitter of life; unhappiness is its nauseating insipidity. God sends sorrow for our bettering; man makes unhappiness for his own tormenting and demoralizing. It is no human fault to know sorrow; but it is a shame for a life to be clouded and deteriorated by unhappiness.

The normal, the wholesome, the noble thing for every soul is, to keep in grateful touch with its blessings and the Giver of them, however simple and humble the blessings may be;

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to be reverently mindful of God's constant goodness and the nearness and inseparableness of human joy. We can not all be great, or heroic, or even fortune-favored, but we can all be happy and thankful; and the path of grateful happiness is one of the straightest of those that lead to heaven's gate.

* * * * *

Who has not sometimes felt that the mere joy of life, when it springs from innocent and sufficient sources, is in itself a justification and a reward of existence? There are times, I am sure, when the best and most unselfish spirits feel toward joy, past or present, as if there were something redeeming about it, as if to have experienced it were in some sort a pledge of immortality, of personal

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salvation. This feeling is not always distinct, not always reducible by the mind to a conviction of a blessed personal immortality; yet there is a thrill about it, a great and deep rapture, that is not easily explainable as a mere result of this hour's or this day's happiness. That haunting sense of having received some foretaste of immortal joy in any deep, pure, earthly happiness, is not an hallucination. It means something, and is not its meaning this: that the condition of mind and soul in which one experiences a pure, exquisite, utterly satisfying human joy is a condition in which one must be in harmony with God, and therefore of one spirit with the redeemed?

Such a great and deep-seeing soul as Phillips Brooks recognized this

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saving quality in what some might call mere temporal delight, or the common joy of living. He regarded it as one of the fine, redeeming experiences of life. I remember a passage in one of his sermons that for a time puzzled me and almost aroused a mental protest. But when I came back to it, after an experience of abiding joy that made simple living seem infinitely sweet, the thought became luminous, and took its place among my deepest and most welcome convictions. The passage is this: "The great joy is just to be alive. The fact of life is greater than what is done with it."

This utterance at first seemed to me strange and inexplicable, as it would, I think, to any one who has not awakened to the true significance

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of the joy of right living. This is the great joy—to be normally alive as a child of God, to be uniformly happy because in harmony with Him and perpetually conscious of His love. To have life resolve itself into such a fact as this is the great thing, greater than any specific thing one can do with life. To have one's soul suffused with peace, constantly, permanently—that, I take it, is what Bishop Brooks meant by the “fact of life;” and that wholeness of life is really a greater, more significant thing than specific achievements of one kind or another.

The broad truth is that life itself, life in its entirety, is a greater and finer thing than any single manifestation of life. To know that redemp-

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tive joy of living, that peace and rapture that spring from wholeness of heart and perfect harmony with God, is, after all, of more account than the particular work in life to which one turns his hand. It is a greater thing to know the essential and abiding joy of life than to know the satisfaction of being a great poet, a great preacher, or a great scientist.

This profound truth—which is missed or but dimly apprehended by so many—imparts a new dignity and sweetness to the average life. It confers upon the soul that is glad with the wholesome joy of right living, the distinction of knowing and proving what is best worth while. It makes the so-called “common” life

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that is sane and whole and well-rounded, the type of life that really counts for most.

This is surely an ennobling and inspiring theory of life. It raises most of us to the possible plane of a dignity that is too often considered the heritage only of those capable of great achievements along special lines. It exalts the every-day man and woman; and that, as Phillips Brooks well knew, is the gospel that is going to save humanity, that is going to keep the average individual from moral and spiritual retrogression. As Bishop Brooks said to the poor washerwoman who objected, when he offered her Trinity Church for her daughter to be married in, "It is n't for the likes of me," "Yes, it *is* for the likes of you, and the likes of

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me, and the likes of everybody.” So the true grandeur of life, for that great seer of saving truth, was for the likes of you, and the likes of me, and the likes of everybody. That was his message, the heart of his preaching. He was distinctively, among preachers, the exalter of the average individual. His doctrine was that the highest plane of life is that upon which the many may stand.

A deep and abiding joy in life, then, may safely be accepted as an indication of oneness of spirit with God, and therefore of the fact that one has grasped the real significance of man's existence on earth. In other words, the great fact is not what one does, but in what spirit, and with what result upon his own consciousness and character, he does

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what his hand or his brain finds to do. Right things done in the right spirit render the only real and profound happiness possible in this world. If one has this consciousness, he is not only salvable but is being saved. That is the reason why our happiness is sometimes so exalting, so thrilling, so prophetic. It is the evidence of the soul's harmony with what is divine and immortal, and therefore of its essential immortality.

The Hallowed Commonplace.

"THE everlasting routine," "the perpetual grind," "this constant traveling in a rut," "pegging away at the old task"—how familiar such expressions are, and how commonly they voice the discontent of people who can not find anything more serious or distressing to complain about than the mere sameness of their days! We find all classes and all grades of men complaining about the monotonies of life. Even great men, doing a great work, are apt to speak of their time as consumed by weary and uninteresting routine. Lives which the more humble of us picture as full of

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interest and variety and inspiration, are how often declared by those who are living them to be wearisomely dull and monotonous! What is wrong with men and women in general, that they should find life so cursed with sameness and tameness and lack of that fresh delight and buoyancy of service which is so essential to best achievement?

The trouble seems to be that we do not rightly interpret and value repetitiousness or sameness in life as an element conducive to truest happiness as well as largest success. It is in the so-called monotonies of life, did we but realize it, that the greater part of the quiet, deep, smoothly-flowing happiness of life consists. Some one has expressed this thought of the joy of the smooth routine of life in

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a most happy phrase—"the dear every-dayness of life." And when one thinks of the matter reasonably and candidly, is it not true that the sense of peace and safety and mastery and wontedness that attaches to the routine of our days is, or should be, one of the deepest sources of personal satisfaction? The task that we are accustomed to, and that we perform with practiced ease and accuracy; the duties that we approach with a full understanding of their requirements and method of performance; the daily events so like one another as to be free from shock and strain; the smooth and at the same time effective alternation of toil and rest, thinking and performing,—are not these repetitious experiences of daily life full of a serene

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satisfaction and comfort, if we only estimate them as we ought? Let a few days of ordinary life be interrupted by unwonted experiences, even such as seem pleasurable in anticipation, and how glad we are to get back again to the accustomed rut! The sense of strain and confusion disappears when we resume our wonted routine, and we breathe a sigh of restful content as we take up the old round of familiar duties.

And still more, if the experiences that have broken in upon the monotony of life are of distressing or exacting sort—sickness, suspense, a trying ordeal of any kind,—what grateful, what blessed relief to return to the dear every-dayness of life! We wonder how we could ever have grumbled over it. How could it ever have

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seemed to us anything but the only serene and happy path for our feet to pursue?

The remedy for dissatisfaction with the routine of life seems to be simple enough—a temporary suspension of the routine, with all the special and unwonted strain that such a departure from one's accustomed habits implies. We have only to discover and re-discover thus in personal experience how dear the every-dayness of life actually is, in order to be weaned from the dissatisfaction and grumbling that are so unworthy and so unbecoming. By thus attaining the right view-point we shall get rid of the notion that there is anything regrettable, anything that ought to be changed, in God's appointment of routine as the normal condition of

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life. We shall see clearly that it is the very condition which is, on the whole, productive of the greatest measure of peace and happiness. Out of no other ordering of life could so much real and permanent happiness proceed.

And if the routine of life is the condition of its highest average of happiness, it is even more evidently the condition of life's highest average of achievement. In no other way than by performing the same kind of tasks over and over again, day after day, can the individual or the race accomplish the greatest amount of enduring work. This in itself should be an added cause for rejoicing in the monotonies of life. If we accomplish more by following the rut than in any other way, we

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ought to be glad that our appointed pathways fall into ruts. There is, then, still another satisfaction besides the peace and ease of the rut—the satisfaction of knowing that we are thus realizing our highest possibilities as workers, as contributors to the progress of the race.

How ungracious to grumble at the very wisest provision which God has made both for our happiness and our usefulness! Of all the paths that strike across the world, there is none, after all, so pleasant and so profitable as the commonplace rut. Abolish it, and you will have a world full of confused, erratic, unhappy, ineffectual men and women—a human chaos. Blessed indeed are the habitual things, the things that regulate conduct, and concentrate effort, and

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fill our days with that quiet, lasting happiness which is the most precious heritage of human experience.

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Bonaventura, "the Seraphic Doctor," wrote in an inspired moment what has been called his "golden sentence"—golden, not in a rhetorical sense, because of any charm of language or beauty of figure, but golden in its depth of insight, its ability to stand the test of what Carlyle calls "the everlasting yea." The enduring truth uttered by the great Italian theologian was this: "The best preparation of a religious man is to do common things in a perfect manner."

Here is a philosophy of personal religion, as we say, "in a nutshell"—the quintessence of all that is essen-

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tial and practical. It is worthy to stand next to Christ's summary of Christian duty: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Bonaventura's "golden sentence" is, in a way, supplementary to Christ's beautiful compendium of the law. Christ emphasizes the perfect relation to persons; Bonaventura emphasizes the perfect relation to things. To be sure, the relation to things, closely analyzed, may be said to be included by the relation to persons, since, unless a man utterly iso-

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lates himself and becomes a hermit, he will find that his approach to things is nearly always by way of persons. Yet it is well to put a little added emphasis upon things in themselves, as Bonaventura does, that we may be impressed by their inherent sacredness. Common things especially we are apt to consider as indifferent, as moral neuters, so to speak, with no positive religious character of their own. The everyday duty, the thing that seems to pertain to the secular life alone, we are apt to ignore on its religious or sacred side. Our relation to persons—to God, to fellowman—we strenuously hold sacred. But there would seem to be serious need of calling the attention of Christian men and women to the fact that the common-

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place, indirectly personal relations of every day are sacred too, with a religious significance of their own, and that, according as we enter upon them and conduct them with the Christian spirit, or fail to hallow them, we are fulfilling or defeating God's purpose with respect to these relations.

You can not draw any lines whatever when you are dealing with the religious life. There are no provinces outside of it. It covers the equator and the poles, and thrusts its roots into the core, of the world of personality. If it does not go through and through a man, it does not go into him at all. That is the nature of religion; it is as thoroughgoing, as permeating, as life itself. It pulses into and suffuses the least

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things—as the life-blood warms the very finger-tips—and says: “These are mine; these are sacred things. Make them so.” Nothing is too small or remote to have a vital religious significance. If we really and truly believe that, we will make an end of drawing those futile lines between what we call secular and religious, commonplace and sacred. There are no such distinctions in the new life which the Lord Jesus Christ brought into the world. Like His own garment, that robe of life is all one piece, seamless, inseparable; and every thread that enters it runs straight through warp or woof, and intertwines with every other thread to form the entire fabric of character.

The Value of Obstacles.

SOME people always lose heart when they come to an obstacle. They turn squarely around, and say, "O well, that puts an end to this scheme. It does seem a pity that I can't take hold of anything without being balked!" The trouble is, that most persons do not understand the true nature of an obstacle. They look upon it as something final, immovable, insurmountable. They seem to consider that it is something intended by a frowning Providence to put a stop to the particular thing which they are doing. Now, this is something quite contrary to the true

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purpose and economy of obstacles. They are not intended to balk effort, but to increase energy.

A stream of water set back by a dam may illustrate the nature and purpose of an obstacle. It is something whose function is to pile up and amass and concentrate energy. It is something to climb upon and dash over with ten times augmented force. Instead of regarding the obstacle as a discouragement and a sign that we are working in the wrong direction, we ought to look upon it as a providential opportunity—an opportunity to test and to augment strength of purpose; an opportunity to rise to the level of higher power; an opportunity to gather new resource and expand to wider channels of usefulness.

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How often has the obstacle, attacked and surmounted, broadened a man's outlook upon what is possible for him to do! How many great and good enterprises have widened and deepened in scope and power by being for the time obstructed and delayed! Wonderful is the power of the obstacle to open men's eyes to the real possibilities of the thing they have undertaken. Wonderful is the inspiring power of the obstacle—its power to expand vision and spur energy. Most wonderful of all is the dynamic, the strengthening power of the obstacle—its power to reinforce the strength that assails it, and augment the resources that are gathered against it.

We rise only by that which opposes. We strengthen only by that

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which antagonizes. Opposition is the life of endeavor. The man who succeeds is the man who makes obstacles the steps of his ladder.

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George Macdonald makes one of his characters say, "Strange how things will not go up unless you hold them down!" This is true not only of kites, but of many other things as well. There must be resistance, in order to stimulate effort and make it most effective—a principle that applies to all sorts of things that have "go" in them. The horse strikes his best and most staying gait when he is firmly held in by the reins. The yacht skims swiftly across the waves only when restrained by sheet-rope and rudder. If the skipper abandons control of these for a minute,

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the yacht lies wallowing in the trough, with flapping sail—a helpless and lifeless thing. The locomotive has to be confined to its narrow path of steel, or its magnificent burst of speed would be converted into a lame, impotent bumping over the ground, and a final smash-up. Some kind of obstacle, in the way of restraint, or friction, or opposition, seems to be required to make specific mechanical force effective in the highest degree.

Human beings are even more subject than inanimate things to the workings of this peculiar principle. As a rule, the things we do that really amount to something are things in the doing of which we have been stimulated by some kind of opposition. Nothing is of more vital value

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to an earnest spirit than the economics of obstacles.

Take poverty, for instance. What grand things poverty has done for many an aspiring young man and woman, or, rather, has enabled them to do! The struggle against adverse circumstances has called out and developed every power and resource at their command. It has proved to be a kind of moral and intellectual gymnastics, toning up the whole being, raising it to the level of its highest powers and possibilities. Money is like a carriage that carries one easily over certain stages of one's journey, but at the expense of flabby muscles and a sluggish circulation. Let poverty compel one to walk sturdily over the same ground, and how much better conditioned he will be

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for the real mountain-climbing of life, where there is no roadway for carriages!

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The moral disciplines of life, too, are tonic and stimulating. Trials, temptations, disappointments — all these are helps instead of hindrances, if one uses them rightly. They not only test the fiber of character, but strengthen it. Every conquered temptation represents a new fund of moral energy. Every trial endured and weathered in the right spirit makes a soul nobler and stronger than it was before.

Indeed, is not stimulus the real and characteristic function of every obstacle? Obstacles were not meant to discourage men and women, but to rouse and develop. Send a young

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man, who knew nothing about the apparatus, into a gymnasium, and he would be likely to stumble and fall over some things that were actually intended to keep the body upright and well-balanced and supple. That would not be the fault of the apparatus or its designer, but of the ignorant, unpracticed young man. So with life. Many of us seem to be ignorant of the real value and meaning of its experiences, particularly its hard experiences. We make stumbling-blocks of the very things that God intended to have us climb by and grow by. That is not life's fault, nor God's fault; it is our own fault. We often seem to be blind to the economic function of obstacles. Everything that opposes us or causes friction we consider a hindrance and

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a drawback. We will not soar up, while the kite-string makes that possible by holding us against the wind. We will not run, while the rein steadies and restrains us that we may run well.

What a sad mistake this is—not to know, not to believe in, the value of obstacles as vital stimulants and helps! Whoever cherishes such a conception of the hard things of life is destined to defeat and disappointment. His carriage of ease may carry him to the foot of the Hill Difficulty, but no further.

Love the Apex of Life.

ONE of the most beautiful conceptions ever expressed in the language of architecture is embodied in the construction of a famous Italian cathedral. To enter this magnificent structure one must pass through two vestibules, each with an arched doorway. Over the first door is carved a wreath of roses, typifying the entrance to the vestibule of pleasure. Over the doorway to the second vestibule, which is larger than the first, is carved a cross, to indicate that this is the gateway to suffering. When one passes through this second vestibule, and enters by another door

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the grand rose-windowed and marble-pillared cathedral itself, the first thing that meets the eye, at the apex of the magnificent arch above the altar, is a circle twined with sprays of amaranth, enclosing the words "ETERNAL LOVE."

The beautiful thought of the architect, thus uttered in stone, sinks into the mind of the beholder with touching effect. This grand cathedral, one perceives, is intended to represent the meaning of life with its varied and contrasted experiences. Joy comes first, youthful, radiant, unalloyed; but it is only for a little while.

The vestibule of the rose-wreath is small and narrow. Soon we pass through it and enter the gateway of suffering, of self-denial, of sacrifice,

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of burden-bearing. This is the larger of the two rooms, the two experiences through which we must pass before life's full meaning is revealed to us. More of life is under the cross than under the wreath. Humanity bears the cross longer, and with a deeper consciousness of its significance, than it wears the wreath. Even the happiest soul knows more of suffering and sacrifice than of pure enjoyment.

But both the joy and the suffering of earth are merely introductory and preparatory. Sorrow, as well as joy, endureth but for a season. In a little while we have passed through the vestibules of life, and the glory of its larger, its eternal meaning flashes upon us: Eternal love!—that is the purpose, the glory, the goal of our

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being. A little earthly joy first, as a hint of what heaven's supream bliss may be. A little suffering—not so very much, after all, except as compared with our joy—and then, through these transitory, preparatory experiences, we come to understand the meaning of eternal love and eternal life, and are ready to enter the temple not made with hands and stand in the light of the great rose-window above the altar.

A true and beautiful conception of life indeed is this, expressed in enduring stone. No worshiper with open eyes and discerning soul can pass through those two vestibules, and then enter the impressive nave beyond, without carrying away in his mind and heart a clearer conception, and a more joyful and triumphant

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feeling, of the sweetness and beauty and significance of earthly experience in its relation to the life of heaven. Joy is for a little while; sorrow is for a little while; yet both are real, both are necessary, both are hallowed. Both have a distinct and close relation to the life beyond the grave. Both, if we use them rightly, are introductory to the eternal life of love.

It would not be best for us to enter the temple of eternal love at once. We could not do so reverently and in the right spirit, any more than the wayfarer could step immediately into the cathedral in the mood and spirit of the worshiper. We need these vestibules, these narrow entrance ways, these introductory and preparatory experiences. They are a part of the temple of life; for God, the

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Divine Architect, has wrought them into His plan.

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Christ analyzed all religion into duties to God and to neighbor; and if we examine the operations of our own spiritual natures, we shall find that all their processes and activities fall under the one or the other of these relations. Every thought and every act proceeding out of and beyond self, and therefore having relations with an environment, is either God-ward or neighbor-ward.

Now, to be in harmony with both sides of our spiritual environment is spiritual peace. It is the condition of knowing with the profoundest certainty—a certainty infinitely deeper than that established by any mere logical process—that the soul

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is discharging its true function in the grand economy of existence; that it is one with the Infinite Purpose, and therefore one with the Eternal Good. Nothing is more impossible than to shake the confidence or destroy the happiness of a soul that feels itself to be at peace with God and man.

And the sole condition of this harmony with spiritual environment is love—love God-ward and love man-ward. He who loves God will be at such peace with Him that all experience—life's discipline of whatever sort—will fall in with a divine order as beautiful and as necessary as the material order of the planets. Such a soul will ever rejoice in God's dealings. Like a brook, it will make its sweetest music over the roughest stones. Whatever happens will be

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best, because it is God's choosing. And so love on the God-ward side of the soul brings a peace which nothing can cloud. It is this sense of harmony with the Divine, and this alone, that enables the human soul to rise superior to the merely temporal significance and bearing of any experience, to interpret it in the light of Providence, and set it sweetly to the music of the larger purpose.

But man must also love his brother man—love him genuinely, love him unselfishly—if he would taste that peace which the world can neither give nor take away. And, indeed, if one but love God truly, how can he help loving his brother man truly also? For the very essence of the love of God is the spirit of universal love. If we can not love God with-

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out loving the very daisy which He has made and clothed with more than regal beauty (and no man truly loves God who does not love His good works), how can we fail to love the being whom He has made in His own image, and into whom He has breathed the breath of His own eternal life and His own pure and holy Spirit? The love of man for man ought to be such a consuming white fire and passion of love that it should burn utterly away the miserable love of self. We ought all of us to so feel, as God feels toward suffering and sin, that we should be willing to make an altar of what we falsely call personal welfare, and burn upon it the sacrifice of devotion to our brothers. This is the love which brings that perfect peace upon the

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man-ward side of our environment. Love to God including love for man, and devotion to God finding its expression in complete and unselfish service of mankind,—these are the conditions of the peaceful soul; these are the impregnable fortifications behind which every man may intrench himself against the assaults of doubt and apprehension, sure that so long as he lives in perfect harmony with his entire spiritual environment, nothing can come to him, here or there, now or then, but the highest good and the purest felicity.

L. O. F. C.

Regeneration.

ONE day an accident happened in the laboratory of the celebrated chemist, Faraday. A workman knocked a silver cup into a jar of strong acid. In a very short time the cup entirely disappeared, being dissolved in the acid as sugar is dissolved in water. One after another the workmen gathered around, and regretfully watched the melting of the beautiful cup. All said that it was utterly lost, that no particle of the silver could ever be recovered. But Faraday, being informed of the accident, brought some chemical mixture and poured it into the jar.

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Gradually every particle of the silver was precipitated to the bottom, and at length the great chemist drained off the acid and took out the silver, now a shapeless mass. He sent the lump of metal to the silver-smith who had made the cup, and in a few days it came back, restored to its former shape and beauty, a wonder and delight to the workmen who had watched its apparent destruction.

How perfect, how beautiful, the correspondence of this incident with the method of God in restoring a human soul! The soul, like the cup, falls into the devouring, disintegrating, dissolving acid of sin. One and another of its fellow-mortals gather round and say: 'Ah! that soul is ruined forever. There is no salva-

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tion for it. It is utterly consumed by sin." And so they would leave it there to perish. But the Divine Chemist comes, and looks pityingly into the jar of life, and drops into it His marvelous, restoring, pardoning grace in Jesus Christ. Then, under that potent influence, the broken, disintegrated soul slowly gathers itself together in a distorted mass, the mere crude materials of its former character. There it lies, all shapeless, helpless, crude, like spiritual ore. What a contrast to its once delicate beauty and shapeliness! But He who saved the precious metal can also restore the beautiful cup. He is both the chemist and the silver-smith. In His divine thought He holds the image of the cup, and shall He not be able to beat and ham-

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mer the precious metal once more into the semblance of the forfeited design? Behold, the restored cup! Behold, the redeemed and forgiven soul! Out of that corroding, devouring acid of sin it comes again, recreated, beautiful, and consecrated, a wonder and a joy to those who thought it irrevocably lost.

Let there be no despair in our hearts because of this world full of sin, this terrible, life-long, aggressive, relentless environment that, like the acid in the jar, is forever thirsting to consume our souls. God looks into the jar and sees the cup dissolving, but He looks not in anger, not in helplessness, not in despair. His eyes are full of love and pity, and His heart is full of help and hope and resource. He will not let the soul

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that is overpowered by sin go down to destruction. He can save it, even unto the uttermost. "My grace," He says, "is sufficient for thee," sufficient unto restoration, sufficient unto salvation, sufficient unto eternal triumph over sin and death and shame. How holy, how consecrated, should be the soul saved by God through the very sacrifice and agony of His own beloved Son. Should it not stand in the house beautiful, in the heavenly mansion, like a pure and shining cup, sanctified and clean, that has twice passed through the hands of the patient Designer, and longs to be forevermore a chalice of His love?

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In the last analysis there is only one thing, after all, of which a hu-

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man being is afraid, and that is his own past life, with its accruing results. Most men are not really afraid of death *per se*, or of pain, or of any catastrophe which is likely to befall them. These facts are proven a thousand times a day. Recklessness and indifference are far more prevalent than cowardice and dread. But there is hardly a man or woman in the world who does not look back with more or less of apprehension and trembling upon past life as registered in the individual consciousness. The world may not understand; the world may even account them saints from infancy; but they know how God looks upon them, and how they look upon themselves. How rare—how almost inhumanly

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rare—is the soul that has no haunting past!

To every soul pondering the problem of future life—whether that soul be avowedly Christian or not—the chance of salvation seems to rest upon the righting, in some way, of a condemning past. So long as that hangs about a man's neck like a millstone, there is no possible tendency for him, in time or eternity, but down, down, forever down. Somehow that incubus must be thrown off; somehow the past must be washed out or made right before any man can be saved. This is the instinctive conviction of the race, no matter what may be the form of its religious, or irreligious, belief. Superstition must even have its sacrifices made and its masses

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sung for the soul that has already passed to its account. On all hands men are crying out, and striving, and being cried and striven for, to get rid of their own accusing past.

It is to this vast, troubled, yearning multitude that Jesus Christ comes with His precious message of hope. What does He say to the sin-burdened, sin-haunted soul? The message is strangely brief and simple, yet how marvelously sweet and sufficient: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." The invitation is personal and direct. We are simply to come and cast the burden of our guilt upon Him, and He will personally assume it, and forever remove it from us, and we shall be wholly regenerated. The solution of

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the whole casuistical problem is so simple, when this light of perfect love falls upon it! By reason of His Divine nature Christ has perfect moral right and power to assume your sin-burden and mine—just as much right as your creditor has to assume or remit your debt to him. We have sinned against Christ, and He, and He alone, can un-sin us.

Where, in all the history of human thought, is there so sure and logical an answer to the universal problem, “How shall a man escape his condemning past?” None was ever offered that brought the peace and assurance of Christ’s personal invitation and promise. O, all ye who are laboring under the dread and discouragement of past sin, unforgiven, come and taste the sweet,

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immediate peace of the Divine forgiveness! There is no other escape from this haunting sense of condemnation for soul-recorded evil. There is no other spiritual peace save the peace of God in Christ. In vain may men labor to atone for past ill deeds and thoughts by present virtue. In vain may they strive to reason God, and a future, and a judgment, out of the universe. A thought, a consciousness, a premonition, will unceasingly torment them; and they will *know* that it is not well with them unless they are forgiven. No soul ever got rid of its haunting past until it yielded it up to the loving, burden-bearing Son of God.

* * * * *

Before the human soul comes to the consciousness of its new birth it

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is like a ship tossed in a storm. Life, with its rough experiences, its blinding and perplexing troubles, its storms of anxieties, disappointments, distresses, sins, seems ready to overwhelm us. We are tossed and driven we know not whither, for we are surrounded by darkness and uncertainty. Then the loving Fatherhood of God suddenly reveals itself to us, and in a moment's space we glide out of the storm into the haven, out of distress into peace, out of peril into safety, out of bewilderment and perplexity into sweet assurance. That is regeneration. When a soul experiences this sudden, joyful feeling of rescue from the turmoil and uncertainty and purposelessness of life, it is born anew. God has received it unto Himself through

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Christ, as the haven under the mountain receives the storm-tossed ship.

How often we hear the question asked, especially by young Christians: "How am I to know that I have been born again? I want some assurance that Christ has really come into my life and made me His." The one sufficient answer to such a question is to be found in the soul's own inner feeling. Has there come into life a new, sweet, all-sufficing sense of peace and safety? Does the old life, with its sins, its soul-struggles, its storms of doubt and distrust and perplexity, seem suddenly far away and stripped of its former dread? Have faith and trust and hope and joy taken the place of uncertainty and fear and spiritual agony? Then the soul may be sure that it has found

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the way to Christ. We must know that we are saved, just as we know when the storm is left and the haven reached. Such an exuberant joy of contrast, of relief, of absolute safety and peace, will take possession of our hearts, that nothing can longer dismay or affright us.

The Long Perspective.

WE are sent into this world to learn the meaning of life. The present stage of existence is not, and never has been, satisfying to a single human soul. Its best conditions fail to answer the deeper needs of man. Something, we feel, lies beneath and beyond this mystery of birth and toil and decay and death; something which we are to lay hold of, however imperfectly, as the secret of human life. And this partial solution, if we so regard it, of the mystery into which we are ushered here in this world, constitutes, according as we apprehend it, the meaning of life.

If there is anything which su-

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premely appeals to the human heart, it is the pathos of incompleteness. Man must needs leave the best that is in him unexpressed. Always it is the last touch, the crowning achievement, that fails. No successful man ever died content with his success. There is so much beyond that remains unrealized! All that he has accomplished seems but preliminary to that which alone is worth accomplishing. Only one Being who ever dwelt upon earth could say, as the shadows of death gathered about Him, "It is *finished*." For all others life goes on unfinished. It is the age-long sorrow of humanity—the sorrow of incompleteness. The more we seem to win, the more we are conscious of losing. Life

"To a Pythian height dilates us,"

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only to cast us down at last to profounder depths.

Inexpressibly sad would be the pathos of incompleteness did we not trust that the arc of life which is broken here will be completed in heaven; that yonder all high and noble hopes and yearnings shall be fulfilled, all achievements crowned, all ideals realized. Heaven—is it not earth's sequel, the second volume of God's great book of life, in which all the mysteries are solved, all the confusions righted, all the misconceptions dispelled, all the fragmentary episodes brought into harmony with the one great controlling motive, all the beginnings of noble work crowned with noble fulfillment, all the sorrows transformed into joys, and all the losses turned to richest

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gains? Truly, with heaven to fulfill earth's broken promises, what seems to us like the pathos of incompleteness is only a momentary sadness at the laying down of imperfect achievement here, to take up perfect achievement there.

* * * * *

Faith looks forward, and sees this perspective of eternity, in which so many strange, inexplicable things of the present life are to be adjusted and made clear. She knows that the present can not explain itself, and she is willing to wait until the fullness of time and of eternity reveals all things in their proper relations. The time is coming when we shall understand the mysteries of life.

But we must wait. We must look into the long perspective, and say,

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“Lord, though I can not see, I believe.” It is a hard requirement, perhaps; but it is just, it is necessary. God has a long work to do, longer than art, longer than life. Our intelligences have not yet reached that point in the grand evolutionary process where we can see the length of God’s purpose. Our spiritual eye is still, like our physical eye, holden. Scientists tell us that, even under most favorable conditions, we can only see about one hundred and fifty miles from point to point of the earth’s surface. Think of that, compared with the immensity of the planet! And then think of the still more restricted spiritual eye of man, compared with the immensity of God’s universe-embracing plan.

It is indeed a small and blind and

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faithless thing to complain of God's dealings with us in this present life. How God must pity our querulousness and impatience! O for a more reverently abiding consciousness of that grand background of eternity! God help us to be more patient, more humble, more trustful, so that, as we go forward in the ascending scale of intelligence and spiritual insight, our larger outlook may never make us ashamed of the former smallness of our faith.

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Our duty is to live and strive as if the mere accident of physical death had never interrupted the joyful continuity of human service. There has come into the thought of the age a noble conception of what this present life is *for*. According to the old

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theology and the old preaching, it was to prepare men for death. But the new spiritual interpretation says: "Nay, life is to prepare us for *life*. We are not to consider its mission performed when it has brought us into a right attitude concerning Christ and salvation—so that, so far as the future is concerned, we might as well die *then*. Life is inexpressibly sacred and significant up to its very last moment of earthly duration, because it is the continuous and progressive preparation for a larger and nobler life to come."

Life for life—not life for death—that is the grander message of the religion of to-day. It is *not* as well for you, hereafter, if you merely accept Christ and salvation in this world, and wait for heaven in which

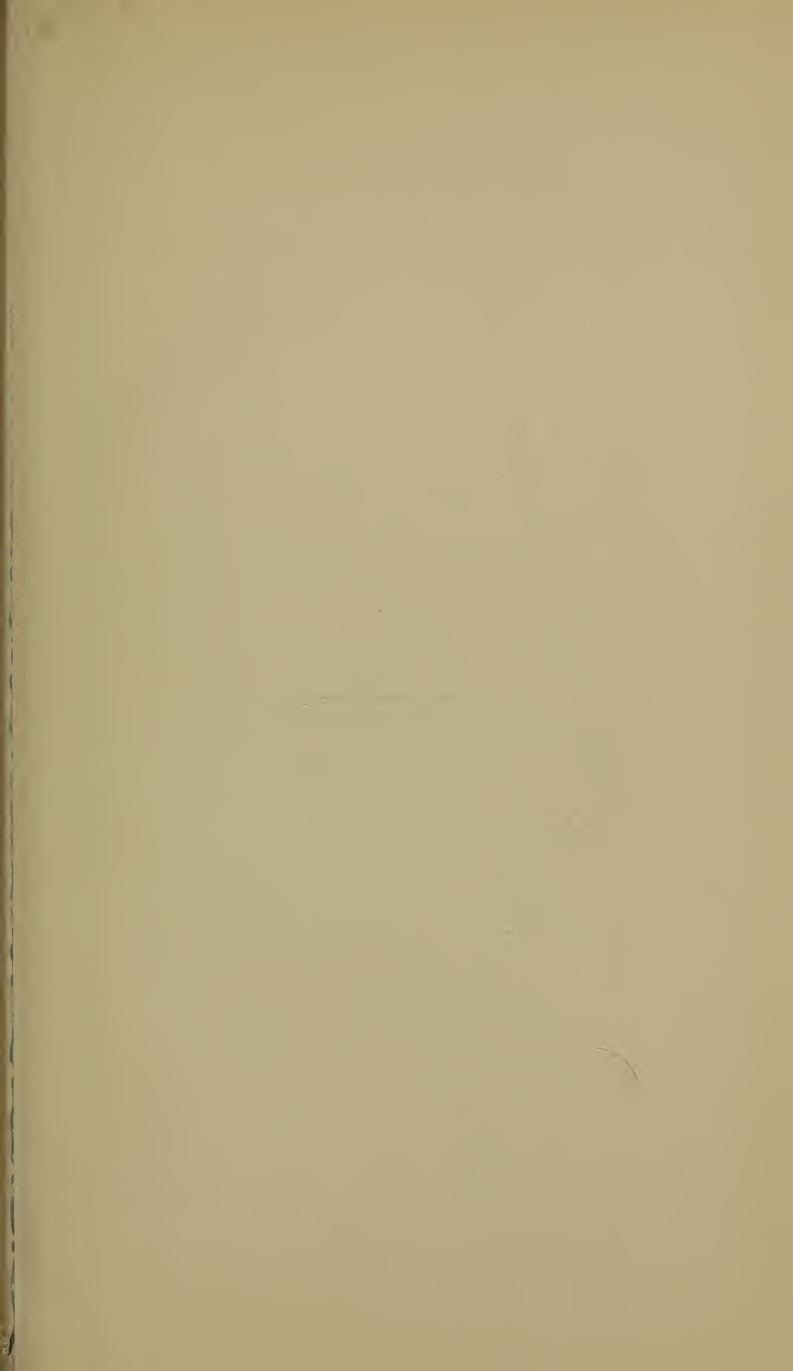
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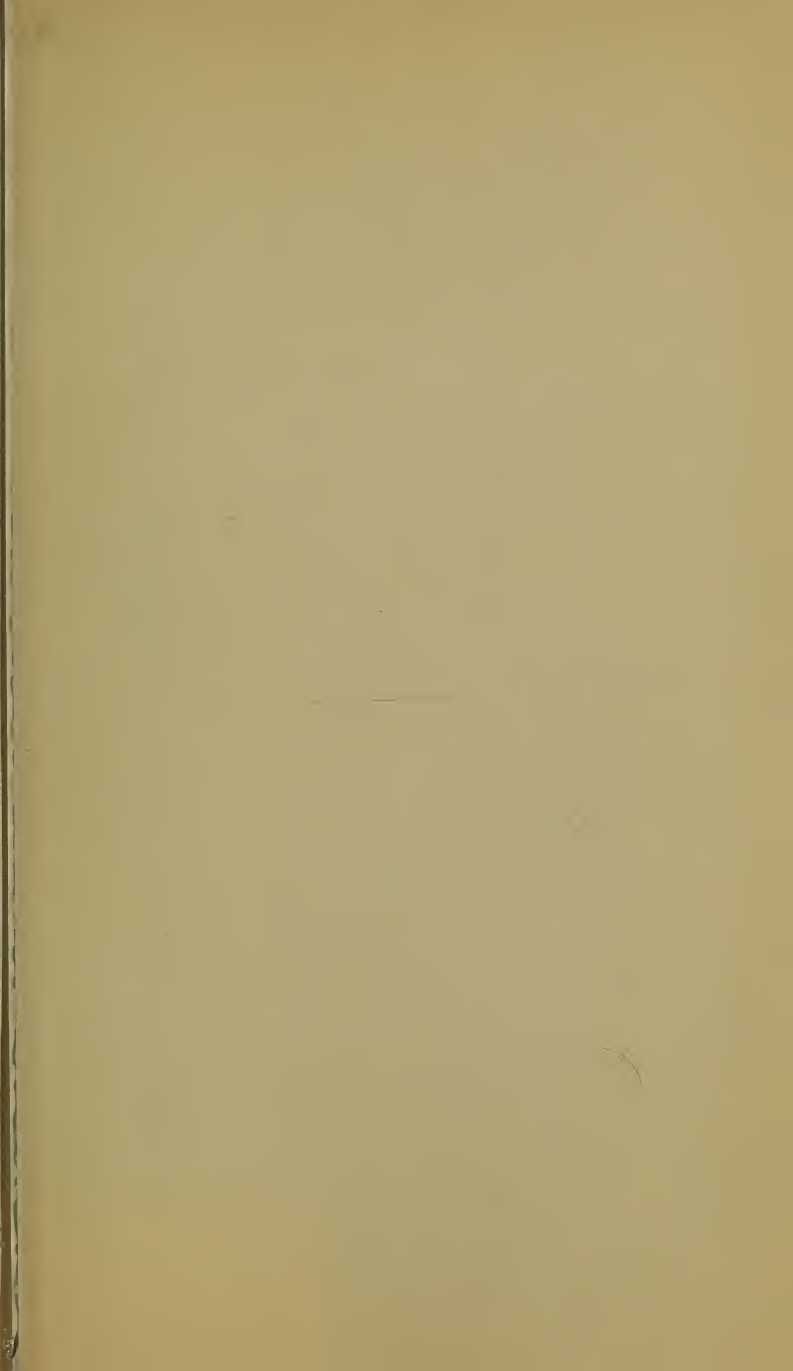
to climb your Pisgah-heights of spiritual growth and blessedness. Begin the heavenly life now. That is the nobler, grander, wiser message of the preacher to-day. Life is not given you to prepare for death, any more than day is given you to prepare for night. You do not work that you may sleep; you sleep that you may work.

Let us think of each hour of present existence as so much added hold upon eternal, progressive life. Let us think of each deed as the beginning of an endless series of deeds of kindred nature—life leading up to life, unbroken, homogeneous, one in purpose, in meaning, in power. Merely accepting salvation is no more what this life was given us for, than just saying, “I will,” is the

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keeping and consummation of the moral law. Life then, life now, life forever, is still a preparation for life. There is no such thing as spiritual inertia in the universe. Christ says, "Come," but after that He says, "Go—go ye into the whole world;" and so by noble, helpful living prepare, not for the hour of death, but for the æon of celestial service which is to come.





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